

18 November 1964

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Possible repercussions of the  
Stanleyville Rescue Operations

1. A column of white mercenaries and AIC units, led by Colonel Van der Halle and Major Hoare, is now near Kinshasa, planning to start its move on Stanleyville on 19 November. It is expected that the column will reach Stanleyville about 24 November, though it might move faster. The movement of this column increases the jeopardy of the 800-plus non-African hostages (including some 25 Americans) in Stanleyville.

2. In anticipation of the increased threat to these hostages, under the Belgian-US plan called Dragon Rouge, a battalion of Belgian paratroops has been airlifted from Belgium en route to Ascension Island by USAF planes. From Ascension, these troops could be flown directly to Stanleyville (6-9 hours) or to Kinshasa in Katanga which is 2-3 hours from Stanleyville. It is now expected that a call for the airdrop of the paratroops in Stanleyville would come from Van der Halle as his column approaches Stanleyville and

he believes there are threats against the hostages; or it might come on the initiative of the US and Belgian Ambassadors in Leopoldville, for example, if they had word of impending reprisals. In either case, the Ambassadors in Leopoldville will make recommendations (via US communications) to their governments with which the final decision to commit the paratroops will rest. There is air support available, including F-6's, F-28's, and B-26's. The B-26's will fly column cover to Stanleyville and supply supporting fire "as required." Additional cover will be provided by the F-28's.

3. The exact whereabouts of the non-Africans in Stanleyville is not known, nor even whether all are in custody. The purpose of the paratroop is to seize the airfield, rescue and evacuate the hostages and withdraw.

4. Previous experience with air action against the Congolese rebels indicates that they have a well developed fear of air attack and tend to seek cover at the first appearance of an aircraft, and remain under cover for 30-60 minutes after the planes disappear. When they believe the threat has passed, they are likely to be vengeful, enraged, and violent. The presence of aircraft over Stanleyville, not accompanied or promptly followed by a rescue of the hostages, could well lead

to capricious killings or an order for wholesale execution. Thus the coordination of the movements of the T-28's, B-26's, and other planes with any airdrop is of major importance. And, even though the hostages in Stanleyville were rescued, the several hundred more Europeans in the Eastern Congo would probably be in additional danger.

5. Should an air rescue attempt, whether successful or not, be undertaken, the US will come under a verbal attack by those African states which already condemn our Congo policy. In the forefront would be Ghana, Algeria, the UAR, Kenya, and Tanganyika, with the support of a number of other African states. Cries of neo-colonialism would be raised in the US and elsewhere. These countries already believe that we are heavily engaged in the Congo operations and would claim that an airdrop was merely overt confirmation of their charges.

6. However, it is unlikely that any concerted action by the OAU or any meaningful action by individual African states against the US would result. The radical states have expressed sympathy for the Stanleyville regime, have furnished some arms to the rebels, and are almost certainly planning to furnish more. However, no African state has recognized the rebels and not even Ghana has wished to appear openly allied with a losing cause.

7. The generally moderate, or pro-Western African states, such as Nigeria, Ethiopia, Tunisia, and Liberia, would probably

remain silent during the crisis. While they might appreciate the propriety and humanitarian purposes of US-Belgian actions, it is not to be expected that they would openly defend it, particularly if the paratroop were coincident, as is likely, with a virtual collapse of the rebel regime and appeared to have contributed to the collapse. Similarly we might expect a passive stance by India and Pakistan, whose nationals are among the Stanleyville hostages.

8. We would anticipate vigorous propaganda use of the "imperialist aggressor" and "neo-colonialist" themes by the Communist Bloc, with the Chinese being louder than the Soviets. The USSR might participate or even lead a move in the UN to condemn the operation, but we think it more likely that the Soviets would rest content with less active forms of propaganda exploitation. It is possible that the attempts to persuade the Soviets to make payments on their arrears to the UN (a large part of which arises out of Congo expenses) would be complicated.

9. In general, we believe that the total sum of adverse effects in Africa and elsewhere would be inversely proportional to the speed and efficiency of the operation. A quick and successful operation would come in for much less criticism than a drawn-out or unsuccessful one. In addition, reactions would be mitigated if foreign troop elements, including the mercenaries,

were quickly and plainly withdrawn after the rescue; adverse reactions would be greater if they stayed on, with or without the ostensible invitation of the Tshombe government. A prompt withdrawal will, however, be difficult to accomplish if only because there are several hundred more Europeans in the hands of rebels at various points in the Eastern Congo (e.g., Pwila, Katwa, and Dima). These include a considerable number of US missionaries. Orders have gone out from the rebels in Stanleyville to round up these whites.

FOR THE BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES:

ABBOT SMITH  
Acting Chairman

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